A SHORT HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN

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PREFACE

In 1956 I wrote a short history of Afghanistan entitled *An Historical Sketch*. In that book the whole pageant of important historic events, from the beginning of the 18th century down to the present day, had been given. In this *A Short History of Afghanistan*, I have tried to throw same light on the Ancient and Medieval periods of the country as well, but emphasis is still laid on modern times.

The book is divided into three parts : (I) Early History, commencing from the early Aryan settlement at Bactria (about 3,000 B. C.) and ending with the coming of the Arabs—7th and 8th centuries A. D. The second chapter, called Medieval Period deals with the coming of the Arabs and closes with the 17th century A. D. The third and the last chapter called Modern History begins with the establishment of national dynasties in Afghanistan and covers the whole period of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. It is hoped that this arrangement will suit the reader interested in Afghan History.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay a tribute of thanks to the officials of the Ministry of Information and Culture and especially to Mr. Mohammed Khalid Roshan, Deputy Minister, and Sardar Fazal Ahmad Zaffar, Director-General of Administration, for their co-operation, help and encouragement which I got from time to time in the printing and publishing of my books.

And finally, a word of thanks to my printers, Malik Mohammed Saeed, S. K. and Sayed Mohammed Hassan Shah, who always with ready courtesy tried their best to get the work done in the shortest possible time.

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INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan, the land of the Afghans, forms the north-eastern portion of the great Iranian plateau. The present name, Afghanistan, is not the original name of the country. The classical writers called it Ariana—the land of the Aryans, while the early Muslim historians named it Khorasan—land of the Rising Sun. It was by the middle of the 18th century A. D., when Ahmad Shah Durrani came to power, that the country came to be called Afghanistan.

At present it is land-locked lying between 29° 30′ and 38° 30′ N. Lat., and between 60° 30′ and 75° E. Long. The total area of the country is approximately 700,000 sq. k. ms. Its estimated population is 15,000,000. No official figure is yet available.

Afghanistan, like Switzerland, is a beautiful hilly country of great snow-covered peaks and deep green valleys inhabited by a virile people. The Afghans have played an important role in the history of Asia. Even in the pre-Islamic days it was the meeting ground of great civilizations. The Afghans in their long and checkered history have been able to lay the foundation of vast empires with great centres of art and culture. It also served until the discovery of the sea-route as an entrepot of thought and merchandise between India, China and distant countries of the West.

Afghanistan, once the crossroads between the East and the West, after centuries of eclipse when the seas became the more accessible and less expensive routes, has been given the opportunity once again to regain its old prominent status with the advent of the air-age. It is located on the shortest air-route between Europe and the countries of the Far East. Truly, never before has the saying that 'history repeats itself' seems closer to dramatic confirmation.

PART I

EARLY HISTORY

. 1 .

EARLY HISTORY

Afghanistan has figured prominently at various times in the history of Asia. It can compare successfully with any other country of the world as regard past history, rich archaeological remains, and the part played by it in the development of human thought and culture. The history of its past civilization goes back to at least five thousand years. It was a seat of culture at a time when Egypt and Babylonia were serving the cause of human thought and art. Bactria, rightly called "Mother of Cities" can boast of having been one of the great centres of ancient civilization. It was in Afghanistan that the Aryans had their first settlement from where they later on moved to India and the western countries. It was also here that the oldest Aryan hymns and a great part of Rigveda were composed. And again it was here that Zoroaster preached his montheistic religion, which later on became the state religion of Iran for many centuries. At a time when Greece was in her infancy, when Rome was not yet born, and when the rest of Europe led a life of ignorance and superstition, there arose in Afghanistan a man of Aryan stock (Zoroaster), who upheld the banner of Truth, entered the field of knowledge, delivered his message of one omnipresent God—Ahura Mazda, and asked mankind to shun evil and follow the three-fold maxim of pure thought, pure words and pure action.

In the fourth century B. C., Alexander the Great conquered Afghanistan after a hard struggle. He left behind Greek settlements in every part of the country. In about 250 B. C., a national movement at Bactria headed by a Greek settler—Diodotus succeeded in establishing an independent kingdom. This dynasty, called Graeco-Bactrian, was destined to last for more than two centuries. This was one of the brightest periods of Afghan history.

Afghanistan during this period assumed the form of an Asian Greece. Greek ideas, culture, art, science, philosophy, literature, language, sports and civic law, which later on influenced the whole of Central Asia, were introduced into the country. These Bactrian-Greeks improved the living conditions of the people by digging irrigation channels, building dams, and constructing splendid public buildings, parks, market places, gymnasia and theatres. The city of Bactria, their greatest monument, came to be called the "Paradise of the East". They kept the torch of Hellenism burning long after it had been put out in its mother-country.

In the third century B. C., during the reign of Asoka the Great, the Mauryan Emperor, Buddhism found its way into Afghanistan and flourished for about a thousand years. The two massive Buddhas, 53 and 35 metres high and thousands of caves at Bamiyan and stupas all over the country are a living testimony to the impact of Buddhism in this country. Recent archaeologists' researches have discovered two stone edicts of this period, a broken one from a place between Darunta and Laghman, and the second one intact and faultless from the old city of Kandahar, which was undoubtedly on the old caravan route. It is bilingual—Aramic and Greek.

In about 135 B. C. the Graeco-Bactrians were driven out of Bactria by an invading horde known as Sakas or Scythians, and the rule of the later Greek kings was confined to the satrapy of Paropomisadae, with its capital at Capisa. It was not long before the Sakas in their turn were forced out of Bactria by a fresh wave of invaders, the Yueh-chis, more properly known to the historians by the name of the Kushans. Their power gradually increased and they soon made themselves masters not only of Afghanistan but of a greater part of Central Asia and Northern India as well. One of their kings was Kanishka (C. 120-160 A. D.) He embraced Buddhism and like Asoka the Great became an active and liberal patron of that faith. He convened the Fourth Council of the Buddhist monks, the last great assembly of its kind, to settle disputed points of the faith. It was at this meeting attended by more than five hundred monks from all over the Buddhist world that the foundation of a new school—Mahayana

The stucco-head of the Buddha discovered at Hadda, six miles south of Jalalabad : reminiscence of the Gandhara School of Art. (Kabul Museum)

The Big Buddha at Bamiyan, 145 miles west of Kabul. It is 53 metres high and is carved out of rock

or the Great Wheel, as opposed to Hinayana or Smaller Wheel, was laid.

Buddhism in origin was not a religion but a philosophy of life and a code of morals. The Buddha was not a god but an inspired teacher, who preached the middle path between indulgence and ascetism. The Hinayana School largely adheres to this original faith as preached by Buddha himself, while the Mahayana School underwent many changes, perhaps under Greek influence, and gradually became a new religion. The old school never depicted Buddha in a human form; his presence was symbolized by an empty chair, a footprint, an umbrella, a riderless horse or an empty throne. According to the new school the Buddha is regarded as a divinity to whom prayer must be offered: he is portrayed in human form and is worshipped. From this time onward Buddha's image became an object of worship. It was from Afghanistan that Buddhism penetrated to China and Far Eastern countries.

The excavations which have been carried at Surkh Kotal, near Pul-e-Khumri, and in some parts of Central Asia and Northern India have opened new horizons in the history of the Kushan period. It is of interest to note that a statue of Kanishka, similar to one discovered at Surkh Kotal, has been found at Mathura and on this his name is also inscribed. Kanishka is frequently referred to as a second Asoka because of his zeal for the propagation of Buddhism. Under his encouragement and patronage, Afghanistan became a veritable holy land of Buddhism. It was during this period that a new school of art, the Graeco-Buddhist, or more properly the Gandhara School of Sculpture, came into being. The final florescence of this art is characterized by works in stucco, the best specimens of which are to be seen in the Kabul Museum.

After the collapse of the Kushans, Afghanistan once more reverted to anarchy and feudalism and was divided into petty states. About 460 A. D., the country was overrun by the white Huns (or Ephthalites). These ferocious barbarians carried ruin and destruction wherever they went and literally extirpated Buddhism by demolishing temples, monasteries and by the wholesale massacre of the monks and population. The art of the

country received a severe setback and the Graeco-Buddhist style survived only in isolated and out of the way valleys as late as the 7th and 8th centuries.

In about 565 A. D., the Ephthalites were attacked by the combined forces of the Sassanians and the the Western Turks. As a result of this contest the Turks became masters of all the white Huns' territories north of the Oxus, while the Sassanians were able to rule south of the river.

Thus by the middle of the 7th century A. D., when the Arabs came to Afghanistan in pursuit of Yazdigird III, the last king of the Sassanians, most of the western part of Afghanistan was under the Persian rule. After the collapse of the Persian Empire, the Western Turks once more appeared on the scene while the Brahman Shahis of Kabul, availing of the opportunity, pushed their frontiers, absorbing a few petty states in their neighbourhood.

Huien Tsang, the famous Chinese traveller of the 7th century speaks of local independent principalities at Bamiyan, Capisa and Jaghori (present Hazarajat). The king of Capisa, according to him, held survey over the whole of eastern and southern Afghanistan. The dynasty is known by the name of Turkan Shahi, Ratbils or Rantbils. The last king of the line, Lakaturman, was displaced by his chief minister, Kalar, an influential Brahman, probably in 850 A. D. He laid the foundation of a new dynasty—Brahman Shahi or Kabul Shahi. We do not know when the Ratbils were forced to quit their capital at Capisa and shift to Kabul. Probably it was in 793 A. D., when Ibrahim ibn Jabal, under orders from Fazal bin Yahya, Governor of Khurasan, led an expedition against Capisa *via* the Ghorband valley and the royal city was literally wiped out of existence. This made the Ratbils shift their capital to Kabul.

Kabul continued to be the seat of the Ratbils and later on of the Brahman Shahis until the end of the ninth century A. D., when the Saffarids of Seistan took it over and destroyed its temples. The seat of Government was first shifted to Gardez and then under the pressure of a fresh invasion by the Saffarids, it moved to Uhind.

PART II

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

. 2 .

COMING OF THE ARABS

Early in the 7th century A. D., the Arabs inspired by the new faith of Islam set out to conquer the whole world. They easily overran the far-flung Persian empire, gave a mortal blow to the Eastern Roman Empire, subjugated the countries of North Africa, and carried the banner of Islam, only a hundred years after the death of the Prophet, as far as Spain and the heart of France in the west and Turkestan in the east. But these victorious Arabs had a difficult time when they entered Afghanistan in pursuit of Yazdigird III, who after losing his motherland had taken refuge in Northern Afghanistan in the vain hope that the Afghans would take up his cause against the Arabs. He soon learned that the Afghans were neither for the Arabs nor for the Persians, rather they were anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity and reassert their complete independence. After the collapse of the Sassanian Empire and the death of Yazdigird, they boldly came forward to fight the Arabs and save their motherland from foreign domination. Few nations have shown more dauntless courage or more indomitable energy than the Afghans in their wars against the Arabs.

Within the space of some fifty years the Arabs attacked Zabul and Kabul no less than six times, but in spite of superiority in numbers and resources, all their efforts were frustrated and the rulers of Kabul held their ground. Each time the Arabs had to fall back after sustaining heavy losses in men and material, and in some cases they were forced to pay huge sums of money as ransom for their men who had fallen prisoners into the hands of the Afghans. Kabul retained its independence until 871 A. D. when it was reduced by a local ruler, Yakub, the founder of the Saffarid dynasty of Seistan.

Though the Arabs failed in their attempts to conquer the whole of Afghanistan by force of arms, yet their missionary activities, had better chance in this country. In the medley of religions, cults, beliefs and superstitions that existed in Afghanistan at this time, Islam infused a new life and worked a mighty change both in the social and cultural life of the people. The Islamic conception of one Supreme God, equality and brotherhood of man completely revolutionized the outlook of the Afghans. The new democratic faith, setting little value on birth, broke down all social barriers, and came as liberator of the depressed classes, who had been living under tyrannies of social and political inequities for centuries.

Islam gave social and political solidarity and cohesion to Afghanistan. The heterogeneous tribes, for the first time in their history, were linked together by a common faith and a common ideal, and like the Arabs were determined to carry the message of Islam to distant lands.

In the domain of culture the contact with Islam had far-reaching results. The Arabs had by now assimilated and developed the knowledge and culture of such ancient peoples as the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Mesopotamians and Persians. This noble heritage was now brought into contact with local culture, and out of these a new culture came into being, which may rightly be called the main source of Afghan culture of today.

National movements against the Arabs

The Afghans embraced Islam willingly and indeed they did not lose by conversion. During the early part of the Abbassid Caliphate most of the key positions were held by the Khorasanis. The Arabs borrowed from them their system of taxation, local administration and even the form of centralized Government. But from the very beginning the Khorasanis emphasized the importance of their own culture and their own customs and trend of thought. It was crystal clear that although they had embraced Islam they were not prepared to accept Arab domination in their local affairs. They wanted to preserve their individuality and the

right to shape their own destiny. From the days of Omar, the Second Caliph, right up to the days of Harun-ur Rashid, the Abbassid Caliph, this struggle of liberation was carried on with ever-increasing zeal.

The first to strike successfully was Abu Muslim, a native of Khorasan, a man of exceptional ability, far-sightedness and undaunted courage. He availed himself of the rivalries and jealousies of the two houses, the Ommayeds and the Abbassids. He took the side of the Abbassids and routed the Ommayeds in a sanguinary battle on the left bank of the Zab river. Merwan II, the last of the Ommayeds, took to flight. He was hotly pursued and ultimately traced in a small chapel on the western bank of the Nile. To sell his life dearly, he came out of his hiding place sword in hand and dashed towards the enemy's ranks. But he soon fell dead transfixed with a lance. With the death of Merwan II, the glorious days of the Ommayeds in the East ended. Only one member of this family Abdur Rahman, succeeded in reaching Spain where he laid the foundation of the Ommayeds of Spain.

After the collapse of the Ommayeds in the East, Abul Abbas, nicknamed Assafah (the Cruel) was elected Caliph, whose house the Abbassids was destined to rule for more than five centuries (until 1258 A. D.) with their capital at Baghdad.

Abu Muslim in recognition of his services was made the Governor of Khorasan, while Khalid bin Barmak, an Afghan noble of Balkh, was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. At the death of Assafah in 754 A. D., when his brother, Mansoor, came to power, he grew jealous of the growing influence of Abu Muslim. By lavish promises he induced Abu Muslim to visit Baghdad and meet him. In the beginning he was warmly received. But a few days later he was treacherously murdered. With his death the first attempt to establish an independent Khorasan came to an end.

Rise of national dynastics

Abu Muslim's noble example, however, was not forgotten by his countrymen. The first to strike a blow was Tahir,

a native of Pushanj, a town near Herat. He declared his independence in Khorasan in 820 A. D., with Nishapur as his capital. His dynasty called the Tahirids was destined to rule until 872, when it was followed by another native dynasty called the Saffarids, whose founder Yakub, was a brazier of Siestan.

The Saffarids, in their turn, were succeeded by the Samanids of Bokhara. They were the descendants of Saman, a Zoroastrian noble of Balkh. The Samanids ruled over Afghanistan, Transoxiana and a large part of Persia for about 120 years, until 999 A. D. Almost all the princes of this line were liberal patrons of learning, who promoted the cause of national literature and language to the utmost of their power. Historians mention the names of a multitude of poets and writers who shed lustre upon the court of the Samanids. Of these Rodaki occupies the first place.

The mighty kingdom of Bokhara experienced the usual fate. In the last decade of the 10th century, two Turkish families divided it between themselves. The Ilakkhani of Chinese Turkestan captured Bokhara in 990 A. D., and nine years later finished off the Samanids, and gradually became masters of all the territories lying north of the Oxus, while those lying south of the river passed into the hands of the Yamini dynasty, better known to the modern students of history as the Ghaznavids.

The Ghaznavids

Alaptagin, the founder of the Ghaznavids, had been a Turkish slave in the bodyguard of the Samanid ruler. He gained the confidence of his master and was appointed Governor of Khorasan. Later on, after the death of his patron, he found himself in disfavour with his successor and was forced to flee for his life. With a few followers he came to Ghazni in 963 A. D., and established an independent kingdom which was destined to expand into a vast empire and to last for a period of about two hundred years until 1186 A. D.

The most famous ruler of this dynasty was Sultan Mahmud (998—1030), son of Subaktagin. He was one of the greatest

generals in history. He conducted at least seventeen successful campaigns against India, adding northern part of the country to his empire. He overthrew the ruler of Ghor, an independent mountain kingdom east of Herat. Although most of his time was spent in wars, during the intervals he could find time for the pursuit of useful arts and knowledge. Due to royal patronage the modest town of Ghazni so n become a big city and a great centre of art and culture rivalling Baghdad, the metropolis of Islam.

Among those who came to his court were some of the leading literary figures of the age, such as Al-Beruni, the mathematician, philosopher, astronomer, historian and Sanskrit scholar ; Utbi, the historian ; Farabi, the philosopher ; Baihaqi, the historian, and above all Firdausi, the author of world-famed *Shahnama*, the great epic poem, which has placed both the Sultan and the author among the immortals of history.

The Ghorids

Ghor is a mountainous country east of Herat. At the time when Ghazni was enjoying bliss under the Ghaznavid Sultans, the Ghorids were slowly rising to power and influence. The two dynasties in the beginning had cordial relations, but the growing power of the Ghorids alarmed the Ghaznavids, leading to a series of wars and conflicts which in the long run proved ruinous to the Ghaznavids. First they were driven out of Afghanistan, and then in 1186, the last king of the line, Khusro Malik, was forced to surrender at Lahore.

The Ghorids, like the Ghaznavids, were great conquerors and builders. They took the whole of Northern India as far as Bengal and Assam. Though the resources of the Ghorid empire were enormous and its military power, judging by the standard of the age, was great, it was not destined to last long. Various causes led to its downfall, chief among these being the rapid expansion of their power in India, which kept the Ghorids too busy to attend to serious dangers that were threatening them from the north.

In the first half of the 11th century the Seljuks, a family of Turcoman chieftains, rose to power in Khorasan and took the greater part of the country. The last of the line, Tughral III was defeated and slain by Takash, king of Khwarizm in 1194. His successors, Khwarizmshahis as they are called, founded a vast and powerful empire including Iran, Afghanistan and the whole of Central Asia.

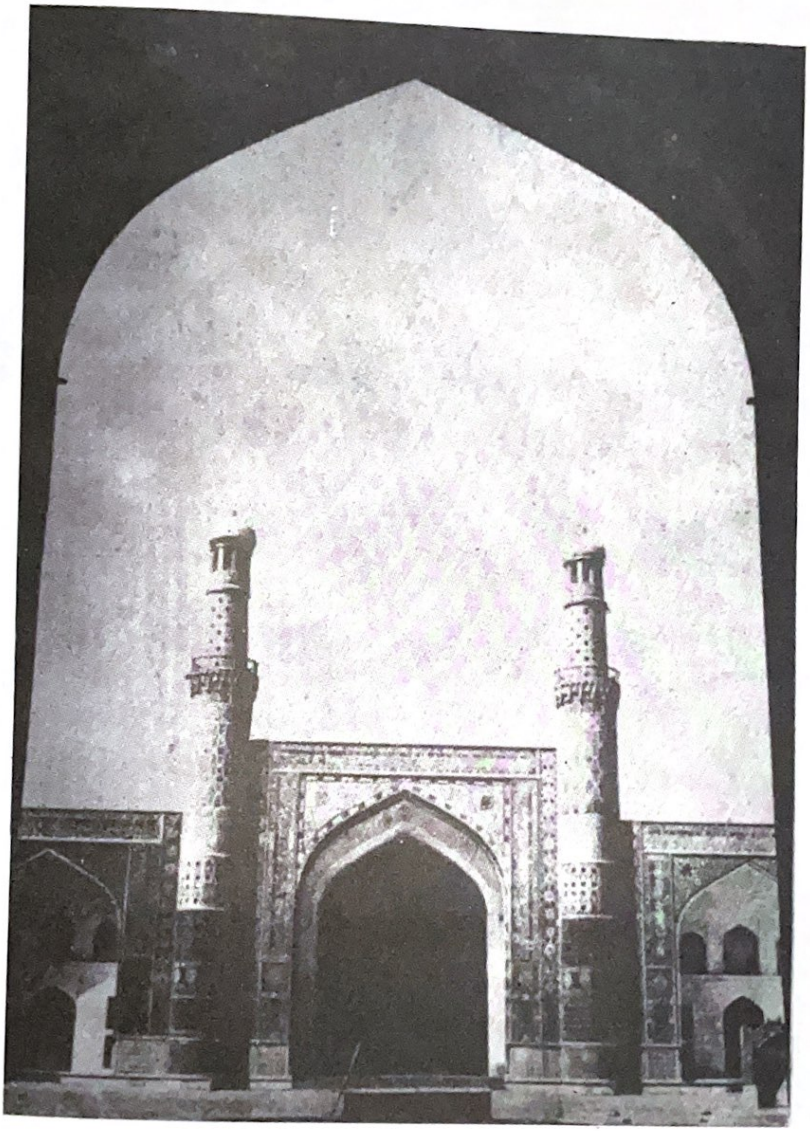
In 1205 Mohammed Ghori was forced to march north towards Khwarizm, because Alauddin Mohammed Khwarizmshah, taking advantage of his long absence in India, was thinking to stab him from behind. Ghori was able to besiege Merv, but failed to capture it. In the battle that followed shortly afterwards he was utterly defeated and was forced to fall back precipitately. This incident practically sealed the fate of the Ghorid empire in Afghanistan.

The Mongol Invasion

After the break-up of the Ghorid dynasty in the beginning of the 13th century A. D., Afghanistan fell to the lot of Sultan Mohammed Khwarizmshah. Though in possession of a great empire, the greedy Sultan planned to overthrow the Abbassid Caliphate and to make himself the spiritual ruler of the Islamic world as well.

With this in view he collected a large army and early in 1218 A. D., set out on his expedition towards Baghdad. He had hardly reached his destination when news was brought to him that the Mongolian hordes, under their great leader, Genghis Khan, had invaded the eastern part of his empire.

Mohammed Khwarizmshah, on receiving the news, hurriedly returned from Iraq with a view to stem the surging waves of the barbarians. Being a coward by nature, he could offer no effective resistance, and fled from place to place hotly pursued by the Mongols. His indecision coupled with his cowardice at this critical juncture greatly facilitated the advance of the invaders who, entering the Central Asian countries including Afghanistan, carried fire and sword with them. The flourishing cities of the country like Herat, Balkh (Bactria) Bamiyan and Ghazni were



This great and beautiful mosque at Herat was built by Ghiassud Din, the Ghori King in the 12th Century A.D. It is a piece of fine art and is decorated with coloured tiles

literally razed to the ground or burnt to ashes. They spared neither old nor young, learned or illiterate, men or women and even animals. Millions and millions of people, some of them scholars of great eminence, were killed in cold blood.

The Mongol invasion, in fact, had a very deep and lasting effect on the cultural development of Afghanistan. It may safely be called a dividing line, or a gulf, between what preceded and what followed this terrific catastrophe. The culture of the country that had been so dynamic and creative declined rapidly, losing its expansive vigour.

As a result of this unparalleled catastrophe in human history, a wave of pessimism and fatalism spread throughout the country. The idea that life is evil and escape the only worthwhile goal gained ground. Intellectual activities diminished and civilization began to decline. Afghanistan in spite of the lapse of seven and a half centuries has not fully recovered from the shock it received at the hands of these wild hordes.

After the death of Genghis in 1227, his empire fell to pieces. In Afghanistan a state of anarchy lasted until the close of the 14th century, when Timur the Lame, or as he is better known by the name of Tamerlane, came to power. Timur though a Muslim, but there is little to choose between him and the pagan Genghis for hideous butchery and destructiveness.

The Timurids

With Samarkand as his capital, Tamerlane overran the whole of Turkestan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Northern India and Asia Minor. He established a mighty empire extending from the border of Sinkiang to the Mediterranean. Not satisfied with this, he was on his way to conquer China. His sudden death on the Chinese Border in 1405 A. D., put an end to his ambitious dreams.

Timur's reign had been one of terror and in the course of his campaigns he destroyed what had been built up since the Mongol wave swept over the country. Fortunately, his successors, the Timurids, were on the whole enlightened people and patrons of art and knowledge. During this period, lasting

for more than a century (1405 –1519), Afghanistan for the most part enjoyed peace and prosperity, and was slowly rising from the shock it had received at the hands of the Mongols and Tamerlane. With their capital at Herat, the Timurids enriched the city with fine buildings, splendid mosques, and monasteries and extended their patronage to arts, literature, philosophy, calligraphy and architecture. This is why the period of their rule is often referred to as the Renaissance of the East.

The first king of this line was Shah Rukh, the fourth son of Tamerlane. He was an enlightened monarch and a man of high literary taste. He had a gifted wife, Gohar Shad Agha, who greatly assisted the King in the administration of the country and in the establishment of schools, colleges and buildings of public utility.

The last great king of the line was Sultan Hussein Bayaqra, whose reign is one of the brightest chapters of Afghan history. The King had a brilliant minister, Amir Alisher Nawai, who like his enlightened master was a patron of art and learning. One of the most prominent figures of this age and the greatest name in Afghan painting is Bihzad. His fame chiefly rests on the production of miniatures. The Mughals of India and the Saffavids of Persia borrowed this art from Herat. The Mughal nobles set Bihzad before the Indian artists as their master of painting.

Another important figure of this period is Abdur Rahman Jami, a mystic poet and a great scholar of his age. He is considered to be the last classical poet of Dari (Persian) literature.

The Timurids were overrun in the early part of the 16th century by the Saffavids of Persia and the Shaibanis of Central Asia, while Ghazni and Kabul fell to the lot of the Mughals of India. Kandahar remained a bone of contention between these two empires for a long time. This state of affairs lasted until the beginning of the 18th century, when a national uprising in Kandahar put an end to the Saffavid rule in Afghanistan.

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PART III

MODERN HISTOI

. 3 .

THE RISE OF THE HOTAKIS

Mir Wais Khan, one of the most influential chiefs, who held the office of *kalantar* (mayor), led a revolt against Gurgin, the Persian Governor of Kandahar. The Persians, caught unawares, could not offer effective resistance and were killed to a man (1709). Thereupon Mir Wais took the reins of Government in his own hands without assuming the royal title. He was content to be called *Mushar* or Chief of his people. Subsequent Persian expeditions, once 20,000 strong, failed to recapture Kandahar, and Mir Wais Khan was left in full possession of the whole province. He ruled his people wisely and on democratic basis until his death in 1715.

Simultaneously, the Abdalis of Herat, encouraged by the success of the Hotakis at Kandahar, took up arms against the Persians, and were ultimately successful in liberating their province.

Mahmud, Mir Wais' son and successor, was not content with the possession of Kandahar and aspired to be a great king and revive the traditional history of his ancestors. He committed a mistake of a very serious nature. Instead of consolidating his position at home and liberating the whole of Afghanistan, he resolved to plunge right into the heart of Persia and strike at the root of the effeminate Persian Empire. In 1722, at the head of 20,000 men, he made straight for Isfahan, the Persian capital. The degenerate Persian Government could offer no effective resistance. After a siege of six months, Shah Hussein, the last of the Saffavids, came out of the citadel and surrendered himself to Mahmud.

Again another blunder was made. Instead of ruling Iran from

his base at Kandahar, he decided to shift his capital to Isfahan in the midst of an alien people.

Mahmud, in spite of his tender age, was a man of talent and energy and set himself to reorganize Persia. But he was not destined to reap the fruit of his labours. He died shortly after (1725) and was succeeded by his cousin, Ashraf.

Like Mahmud, Ashraf too was young and energetic, but he came to power at a very critical time. The Afghans in Persia were now having troubles on all sides. The Russians were advancing from the north, while the Ottoman Turks had made themselves masters of the western part of the country. Shah Ashraf was able to stop the Russian advance at Darband and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Turks who were marching on the capital from the west. While he was thus engaged, news was brought to him that a brigand-chief, Nadir Kuli Khan (who later came to be known as Nadir Shah of Persia) had attacked Tus and was on his way to take Herat. Ashraf, busy on other fronts, was greatly alarmed to learn this disquieting news. Losing no time, he collected all the troops available and hastened to the north to meet the Persians. At Damaghan, he found the Persians strongly entrenched. The Afghans, although tired and worn out by their long and tedious journey through one of the most inhospitable parts of the country, could not desist from attacking the enemy at once in their strong position. The Persians received the shock, reeled and staggered but kept their ground. The Afghans made a second assault. This too failed to achieve its object. Exhausted already by their long journey, they fell back in the direction of Isfahan, hotly pursued by the enemy, who gave them no time to reorganize their army (October 2, 1729). Finding their position untenable even at the capital, the Afghans departed with all the members of their families. Ashraf, with a few faithful followers, endeavoured to reach his native-land *via* Seistan, but was treacherously murdered by a Baluch chief, who thereby hoped to get a reward from his enemy—Nadir Kuli. Thus ended the Afghan rule in Persia (1730 A. D.).

Nadir Shah of Persia invades Afghanistan

Nadir, after consolidating his position in Persia, turned his attention to the east with a view to taking Herat. The Abdalis

at this juncture were besieging Meshad. Zulfikar Khan, son of Mohammed Zaman Khan and brother of Ahmad Khan (later Ahmad Shah Durrani) appealed to Mir Hussein of Kandahar (brother of Mahumd) for help. Saidal Khan Nasiri, a Ghilzai chief of repute, was despatched to their succour. In an engagement near the Afghan border, the Afghans were able to inflict a crushing defeat on the Persians. Nadir with only eight men was cut off from the rest of his army and took shelter in a small tower. This would have been the end of the drama, but no one recognized him and the golden opportunity was let slip away.

Nadir made good his escape, and on receiving re-enforcement, once more took the offensive and marched on Herat. The besieged fought desperately, but dissensions in their ranks forced them to sue for peace. Nadir, impressed by the valour of the vanquished, treated them with marked clemency and tried to win them over to his side.

In 1737 Nadir once more was on the move with the object of taking Kandahar. After long preparations he came out of Isfahan at the head of a large army, estimated at 80,000 men. At Kandahar he met stiff resistance at the hands of Mir Hussein, brother of Mir Mahmud-e-Hotaki, and it was not until after a tight blockade of fully one year that he was able to take the city (March 1738).

The occupation of Kandahar brought Nadir into clash with the Mughal Empire of India. After taking Kabul, then a part of the Mughal Empire, Nadir marched on India. The Mughals army came out to oppose his advance at Karnal, north of Delhi. The Indians were no match for the hardy and tough soldiers led by Nadir in person.

It was all over in less than two hours. The Mughals were completely routed and had no alternative but to sue for peace (February 19, 1739).

Nadir, after a stay of a few days at the imperial capital, took p ssession of its treasures and jewels including the celebrated peacock throne and then left for his native land.

On reaching Meshad he intended to make it the capital of his vast empire. But he did not live long to reap the fruit of his triumphs. In the spring of 1747 a conspiracy was formed and he was assassinated in his camp at Khabushan. Within a few years after his death, the mighty empire which he had created, fell to pieces.

THE DURRANIS

After the death of Nadir Shah, Ahmad Khan Abdali with his contingent of 4,000 Afghans returned to Kandahar. There in October, 1747, a tribal Jirga was held to consider the future of the country and to elect a king of their own. Every one of the tribal chiefs put forth his claim. So heated did the discussion and dissensions become that recourse to arms seemed imminent. At this critical moment, Sabar, a respectable *dervesh*, intervened on behalf of Ahmad Khan. Making a wreath of sheaves of wheat, he put it on Ahmad Khan's head and said, "May this serve you as a crown."

The choice was approved by all and Ahmad Khan became the elected king of the Afghans.

Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747—1773 A.D.)

Ahmad Shah was a chief of the Sadozai clan, a branch of the Abdalis. On his accession he took the title of Dur-i-Durran (Pearl of the Age). So the family has come to be known as Durranis.

Ahmad Shah, though very young at this time (for he was hardly twenty-five) proved himself to be a capable ruler. His first object was to secure the affection of his people and to weld them into a strong nation. His popular manners, combined with his courage, activity, vigilance and other martial virtues, soon endeared him to high and low and he became the idol of his people who gave him the title of Baba—Father of the Nation.

Within the short space of a quarter of a century, Ahmad Shah was not only able to liberate Afghanistan from foreign yoke, but carried his victorious arms from Meshad to Kashmir, and from the Oxus to the Arabian Sea.

Timur Shah (1773—1793)

Ahmad Shah was succeeded by his son, Timur, but he lacke the energy and farsightedness of his illustrious father. It is nc possible for a successor of a great king to rest upon his father's laurels and enjoy perfect tranquillity without exerting himself for it.

So was the case with Timur. As soon as the grip of the master hand was no more, numerous sources of dangers cropped up. Timur was incapable of dealing courageously with all these difficulties. The result was that the chiefs gave him but nominal homage and the greater part of his reign was spent in quelling these uprisings. His shifty and vacillating policy and easy-going temperament brought a great loss to the kingdom founded by Ahmad Shah the Great and its real disintegration began with his reign.

Zaman Shah (1793—1800)

After the death of Timur, his fifth son, Zaman, was able to occupy the throne with the help of Sardar Payenda Khan, the influential chief of the Barakzais. But Zaman Shah from the very beginning of his reign was beset with innumerable difficulties, both external and internal. His elder brothers, Humayun, Governor of Kandahar, and Mahmud, Governor of Herat, thinking themselves lawful heirs to the throne, took up arms to contest for power. These civil wars which lasted throughout the 19th century greatly weakened Afghanistan and made it an easy prey to foreign aggresions and intrigues. By the end of the 19th century, Afghanistan was reduced to a small state, the Afghans losing all their foreign possessions and a considerable part of their own country as well.

Zaman Shah after consolidating his position in Afghanistan, turned to India, with the sole object of turning out the British from that country. But there was too little security at home to ensure success abroad.

The British were greatly alarmed to learn of his plans. They took prompt measures for the security of their Indian territories

now threatened by Napoleon on one side and by Zaman on the other. Captain Malcolm was accordingly deputed as Envoy to Persia to induce Fateh Ali Shah Kajar to bring pressure upon Zaman Shah and divert his attention from his threatened invasion of India to the western border of Afghanistan. The Shah went a step further. He helped Mahmud, the *ex*-Governor of Herat, who was granted an asylum in Persia with men and money and encouraged him to advance on Kandahar.

Mahmud, assisted by Fateh Khan, son of Payenda Khan, took Kandahar after a siege of 42 days. Emboldened by these initial successes, he pushed on towards Kabul.

Zaman Shah, who was then in India and had proceeded as far as Lahore, hurried back to retrieve his losses. But Ahmad Khan Nurzai, the commander of his forces, who had some personal grievances against the king, decided to join the ranks of the insurgents. Due to this treachery the cause of Zaman Shah became almost hopeless. All was given up for lost and the King, leaving the battle-field in dismay, flew to Kabul precipitately. He could not even stay there for long and left for Peshawar with a few faithful followers. Near Jigdalik he decided to pass the night at the fort of Ashiq Khan, one of his old adherents. But Ashiq turned out to be a traitor. Detaining his honourable guest, he sent a swift messenger to Kabul to infrom Mahmud and Fateh Khan of Shah's confinement.

Asad Khan, a younger brother of Fateh Khan, was immediately despatched to secure Zaman Shah and his party. The King's eyes were pierced with a lancet on the spot. He was then taken to Kabul and imprisoned at Bala Hissar, where he remained till the end of Mahmud's reign (1803).

Shah Mahmud (1800—1803)

Mahmud was an incapable, selfish and indolent ruler. He took no interest in the welfare of his people, rather he squandered the treasures accumulated by his father and grandfather, and left the entire affairs of the State in the hands of his powerful

Shah Mahmud-e-Durrani

Amir Dost Mohammed Khan

and resourceful Vazier, Fateh Khan. The minister, too, had a rival in the person of Akram Khan Alizai. The rivalries and jealousies of these two influential chiefs gave great offence to the people. There were risings on all sides and the king's army could not cope with the situation. Some of these chiefs, who had personal grievances against the king or his ministers, invited Shuja, a full brother of Zaman Shah to Kabul. The intrigue was successful. Shuja rode into the capital triumphantly. Mahmud, finding that all was over, sued for peace. His life and eyes were spared, but he was taken to the Bala Hissar and cast into prison.

Shah Shuja (1803—1809)

The new king was incapable of restoring peace and prosperity in a country shorn by internal dissensions. The chiefs had become too powerful and unruly, while the outlying provinces were trying to assert their independence. The Sikhs were encroaching upon Afghan territories from the east and the Persians from the west. The Shah could not conciliate the powerful Barakzai chief, Fateh Khan. This caused the general condition of the country, already on the verge of bankruptcy and ruin, to deteriorate still further.

Napoleon of France was at this time at the zenith of his power. In 1807 he and Alexander I of Russia signed the Treaty of Tilsit. The two monarchs mediated a combined invasion of India. This once more roused the British to efforts in order to recover their lost prestige at the Persian Court. They also planned to protect their Indian Empire by binding the western frontier states in a chain of friendly alliances. A mission, headed by Elphinstone, was sent to meet Shah Shuja at Peshawar for the purpose of discussing ways and means of mutual defence against the threatened invasion of Afghanistan and India. The Mission was warmly received and resulted in the conclusion of a treaty of friendship (June 7,1809).

Hardly had the Mission left Peshawar when news was received that Kabul had been occupied by Mahmud and Fateh Khan. The month of June had not come to a close before it was evident

that the Shah's cause was hopeless. After a short encounter near Gandomak, Shah Shuja's forces were routed, while he turning off, withdrew beyond the border to await a favourable opportunity.

The Rise of the Barakzais (or Mohammsdzais)

Shah Shuja, after making a futile effort to recover his throne, was at last imprisoned at Peshawar and carried off to Kashmir. In 1812, however, he was able to make good his escape. He came to Lahore hoping to get the help of Ranjit Singh, the ruler of the Panjab, in regaining his lost throne. But contrary to his expectations, the Sikh ruler treated him badly and robbed him of the famous diamond, Koh-i-Nur. The fugitive monarch, after various vicissitudes, ultimately took refuge with the British at Ludhiana.

The Barakzais were now dominant throughout the country. This incited the jealousy of Kamran, Mahmud's eldest son. He began therefore, looking for an opportunity to bring ruin upon Fateh Khan and his influential brothers. In 1816, a powerful Persian army advanced on Herat. Haji Feroz-ud-din, the Governor, appealed to his brother, Mahmud, for help. Fateh Khan set out in that direction. The Haji was made a prisoner and sent to Kabul under strong escort. Dost Mohammed, a younger brother of Fateh Khan, was appointed to seize the treasures. He robbed some of princesses of their valuables, whereupon the sister of Kamran, wife of Prince Kasim, son of Haji Feroz-ud-din, called upon her brother to avenge the insult.

Kamaran, who had an outstanding grudge against the Vazier, did not fail to avail himself of the opportunity. Repairing to Herat under guise of leading re-enforcement, he caught hold of Fateh Khan and immediately deprived him of his eyesight, while Dost Mohammad made good his escape to Kashmir.

Retribution immediately followed this outrage. The Vazier's brothers, some twenty in number, took up arms in every

direction. The Shah asked the Vazier to write to his brothers to submit. He replied boldly that he was blind and had no control over them. Irritated and enraged by his answer, the Shah ordered the unfortunate minister, to whom he twice owed his crown, to be cut to pieces. Fateh Khan met his death heroically. He made no cry and offered no prayer for mercy, and died as he had lived bold, dauntless and resolute. The end of the Vazier was also the death-knell of the Durrani dynasty.

The cruel death of Fateh Khan roused the vengeance of the powerful Barakzai brothers. The first to enter the field was Dost Mohammed. He took Peshawar and Kabul and drove the Shah and his son Kamran from all their possessions except Herat, where they managed to maintain a precarious footing for a few years. The whole of remaining Afghanistan was parcelled out among the Barakzai brothers.

In the confusion that followed Afghanistan suffered heavily ; Balkh was siezed upon by the Khan of Bukhara, the trans-Indus Afghan districts were occupied by the Sikhs, and the outlying provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan assumed independence.

In the partition of Afghanistan, Ghazni, Kabul and Jalalabad fell to the lot of Dost Mohammad Khan (1826). He thus became the most powerful of the Barakzai Sardars. Five of his half-brothers jointly ruled Kandahar.

Dost Mohammed Khan or the Grand Amir (1826—1839)– Again (1843—63)

Dost Mohammed Khan is the founder of the Barakzai or Mohammedzai dynasty which is still in power. As soon as his position was secure at Kabul, he made up his mind to recover Peshawer. Dost Mohammed could not forget that Peshawar was an integral part of Afghanistan and that the Sikhs had occupied it during the confusion that followed the death of Vazier Fateh Khan. Failing to get it back by peaceful means and negotiations, he resolved to wrest it by force. Assuming the title of Amirul

Mominin (the Leader of the Faithful) he declared a religious war and called upon his people to join in his expedition. At their head he advanced upon Peshawar, but the shrewd Sikh leader, finding himself too weak to meet him in open field, sowed treason and dissension in Amir's camp. The result was that the invading army without giving battle melted away and Peshawar was lost to the Amir.

In November, 1837, Mohammed Shah of Persia laid siege to Herat. The Russians, anxious to have the Persians compensate themselves with Afghan territory for Russian conquests of Persian territories in the Caucasus, supported the Persians. The British, fearful that Persia was falling completely under Russian influence, determined to enter into alliances with the rulers of Herat, Kabul and Kandahar. With this view a mission was sent to Kabul under Captain Burnes. Dost Mohammed Khan was not disinclined to welcome a power from which he expected support in his attempts to recover Peshawar. But he was unable to obtain from the envoy the assurance which he hoped for. At the same time the appearance of a Russian agent, Capt. Vikovich at Kabul, alarmed the British and Burnes left Kabul empty-handed.

The failure of Burnes's mission led the Governor-General of India, Lord Auckland, to invade Afghanistan, with the object of restoring Shah Shuja to the throne of Kabul. Thus, the First Anglo-Afghan War began at the end of 1838 with the British invasion of the country. A British army, called the Army of the Indus assembled at Firozepore. Shah Shuja was supplied with necessary funds to raise an army of his own. As the Sikhs did not allow the British to go through their country, it was decided that the army should march along the Satluj down to the Indus, and then *via* Sukker and Shikarpur and through the Bolan Pass advance on Kandahar. In April, 1839, after suffering terrible privations and heavy losses amongst their transport animals from predatory attacks of Baluchs, Kakars and Achakzais, the British army led by Sir Keane reached Kandahar. Shah Shuja was crowned in the mosque of Ahmad Shah.

Sir William Macnaughten British Envoy to Kabul who was shot dead by Vazier Akbar Khan on December 23, 1841, for "his attempt to out-diplomatize the Afghans."

Vazier Mohammed Akbar Khan s/o Amir Dost Mohammed Khan Hero of the First Anglo-Afghan War.

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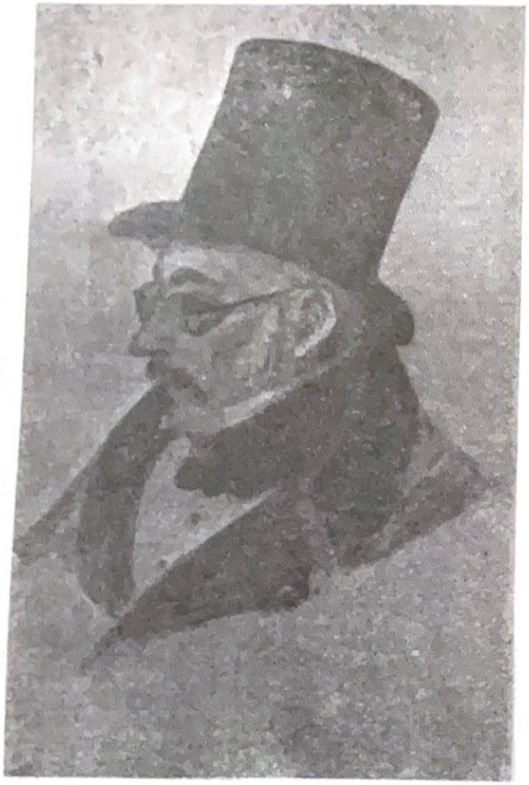

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Vazier Mohammed Akbar Khan
s/o
Amir Dost Mohammed Khan
Hero of the First Anglo-Afghan War.

On the 27th of June, the force moved on northwards, and on the 21st of July after a severe encounter, the citadel of Ghazni was carried by storm. In August, 1839, the British took Kabul and installed Shah Shuja on the throne. Dost Mohammed, finding his army thinned by treachery, fled across the Hindu Kush, and although hotly pursued, escaped to Balkh. A little later he was offered asylum by Nasrulla Khan of Bukhara.

However, the Afghans did not take kindly to the occupation of their capital by a foreign force, nor would they tolerate being governed by a sovereign who was a mere puppet in the hands of the British. Shah Shuja was supported entirely by British bayonets.

Insurrections broke out in various quarters, but on the whole the winter of 1839-40 passed without any serious encounter. As spring approached the war clouds thickened and the whole summer and autumn were spent in a vain endeavour to put out the smouldering embers of hatred and discord. As soon as the flames were stamped out in one place, they broke ont afresh in another quarter.

It will be remembered that the Amir, after the fall of Kabul, had repaired to the north, and ultimately was granted an asylum in Bukhara. Now on hearing this news of his homeland and the bold stand of the tribes against the British, he returned to Afghanistan and joind the ranks of the patriots. The British were greatly upset when they heard this. General Sale was sent to Samt-i-Shimali to cope with the situation. A fierce battle took place at Parwandarah (now Jabalus Siraj) in which the British sustained a crushing defeat (November 2, 1840). But soon after the battle, the Amir disappeared from his camp, and no one knew where he went. Next day, to the surprise of all it was learned that the Amir had surrendered himself to the British at Kabul. He was then deported to India with all the members of his family.

So hostile was the feeling of the people that it was found impossible to evacuate the country even after Dost Mohammad

Khan had surrendered himself in November 1840 and had been sent as an honourable pensioner to Calcutta.

Even after the deportation of Amir the situation did not improve. Constant outbreaks all over the country showed that the situation was growing rapidly worse. Appeals were sent to General Sale at Gandomak and General Nott at Kandahar to come to the rescue. But Sale, finding he had not sufficient transport, preferred to fall back on Jalalabad, and Nott could not advance beyond Ghazni. The British force in Kabul finding itself abandoned and in a precarious position concluded a humiliating treaty with Akbar Khan, son of Dost Mohammad Khan on December 11, 1841, promising to quit Afghanistan without further delay and to set free Dost Mohammad. But Macnaughton, British Political Officer, was not in a mood to carry out the terms of this agreement. Instead he set about sowing dissensions among the Afghan chiefs. Akbar Khan, therefore, invited him to a Jirga (tribal assembly); the result was the assassination of Macnaughton at the hands of Akbar Khan. A new treaty of withdrawal was made with the Afghan Chiefs.

On Jannary 6, 1842, the British force and camp-followers, in all 16,500 men, marched out of Kabul, intending to go to Hindustan, in reality marching into the jaws of death. Tribesmen swarmed around their line of retreat. The British generals lost their head and the troops their morale. Women, children and many officers were surrendered as hostages to Akbar Khan. The rest struggled on in misery through snow-storms and a constant hail of bullets. The retreat became a rout, the rout a massacre. Seven days later (on January 13) one solitary survivor, Dr. Brydon, half dead with wounds and exhaustion, staggered into Jalalabad to tell the story of the disaster to the astonished British garrison.

Lord Auckland, the man mainly responsible for this sad episode, was shattered and unnerved by the news of appaling calamity. He laid down the reins of office and was succeeded by Lord Ellenborough. As soon as the new Governor-General arrived in India, he announced that the British Government

would no longer peril its armies, and with its armies their Indian Empire. He determined on the immediate evacuation of Afghanistan without any attempt at reprisals or even the rescue of prisoners still in the hands of the Afghans. Nott was ordered to abandon Kandahar, while Pollock and Sale were instructed to withdraw to Peshawar. The Governor-General met the retreating troops with great pomp and show in a grand camp at Ferozepore, decorated with triumphal arches. Dost Mohammad was released. He hastily returned to his country, now without a ruler, for the ill-fated Shah Shuja was murdered by his own subjects, a few days after the British garrison abandoned the capital.

Thus ended the final phase of the First Afghan War. It cost the British 20,000 lives and the waste of more than £ 20,000,000. Nearly all British historians agree that the war had been an unjust one. Typical is this observation : "We plunged into a most unrighteous war beyond the boundaries of India, shedding the blood, and interfering with the independence of a people with whom we had not a pretext of quarrel. . . . . The terrible Afghan expedition made an indeliable impression on the minds of the Afghans. It is certainly true that, so for as the military honour and reputation of England is concerned, these were speedily reasserted and vindicated, but it was not possible for the Indian Government to win the confidence of the Afghans."

Dost Mohammad reigned till 1863, and during these twenty, years he was able to establish peace throughout the country. He died at Herat, thirteen days after the capture of the city, and according to his will was succeeded by his third son, Sher Ali Khan.

Amir Sher Ali Khan (1863—79)

His elder brothers, Afzal Khan and Azam Khan rose against him and for five years the Amir led a life of extraordinary vicissitude, now an outcast fleeing for his life, now a ruler in a solitary outlying province, now the *de facto* ruler of the greater part of the country. At last, in 1868, he was able to re-stablish his authority throughout Afghanistan.

Remnant of a grand army—the Army of Indus. Dr. Brydon, the sole survivor, reaching Jalalabad, half dead of wounds and exertion, on January 13, 1842

Amir Sher Ali Khan with members of his Council. The boy next to him is Abdullah Jan, his favourite son

Meanwhile the British in pursuance of their Forward Policy were moving slowly ahead into the tribal area bordering Afghanistan. Advocates of this policy wished to see Afghanistan absorbed within the British Indian Empire. In 1874, the Forward Policy gained the upper hand and a series of negotiations with Sher Ali ensued during the following years. Finally, when the British saw that they could not achieve their object by peaceful means, they resorted to force and declared war on the Amir. Late in 1878, the British once more invaded Afghanistan. This was the beginning of a second war with the British.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878—1881)

A large force was mobilized for the invasion of Afghanistan. On November 21, 1878 the three great passes of Afghanistan were crossed by the British armies. Sir Samuel Browne threatened the Khyber and Major-General Roberts marched up the Kurram valley. The southern invading force under General Stewart marched from Quetta through the Bolan Pass upon Kandahar. The forces met a stiff resistance on all fronts, but by the end of December, Browne had reached Jalalabad, Roberts fought his way through the Shuttargarden Pass, and in January Stewart entered Kandahar. Sher Ali, leaving his son Yakub Khan as regent at Kabul, went to Mazar-i-Sharif, hoping to get some help from the Russians. But the Russians advised him to make his peace with the British. The Amir, worn out by physical diseases and mental worries, died at Mazar on February 21, 1879.

Amir Sher Ali was one of the best kings that ever ruled over the country. He started a Persian paper called *Shamsul Nihar*, and introduced a modern postal system into the country. He reorganized the army on modern lines and did his best to make Afghanistan a strong, powerful and progressive country.

The Treaty of Gandomak

By the Treaty of Gandomak (May 26) Yakub Khan agreed to receive a permanent British Embassy with a suitable escort at Kabul to conduct his foreign relations with other States in

accordance 'with the advice and wishes of the British Government,' and to allow such rectification of the frontier as was demanded by the Advocates of the Forward Policy. In return, the Amir was promised help against external aggression.

The news of the conclusion of peace was received with much satisfaction in England and the Government congratulated itself and the country on the attainment of a "scientific frontier". Prime Minister Beaconsfield wrote to the Viceroy : "Greatly owing to your energy and foresight we have secured a scientific frontier for our Indian Empire." Sir John Lawrence's warnings were ignored. The Advocates of the Forward Policy triumphed ; the Indian frontier was to rest not upon the Indus, but on command of the passes.

But the triumph was short-lived. The Indian Government once more, by painful experience, had to learn the lesson that the moment a ruler of Afghanistan is supported by any foreign power, he forfeits all the respect and allegiance of his fellow countrymen. How blind the Viceroy was to the real state of affairs may be seen from his statement that "the Afghans will like and respect us all the more for the thrashing we have given Sher Ali." A month after these words were written, the clouds were ominously gathering, and the fate of Burnes and Macnaughten was impending on Sir Louis Cavagnari, who had entered Kabul as British Resident on July 24, 1879.

On September 2, Cavagnari sent a telegram to the Viceroy containing the words "All well." The next day the Envoy and his whole escort were murdered in the Bala Hissar. The jubilation with which Beaconsfield and Lytton regarded their handiwork was rudely disturbed. "The web of Policy," wrote the Viceroy, "so carefully and patiently woven, had been rudely shattered." British forces were soon once again in motion and before the close of October, General Roberts was able to occupy Kabul. Yakub Khan was forced to abdicate and sent to India, where he resided until his death in 1923.

Meanwhile Roberts' position in Kabul was far from secure. Afghanistan had practically replaced into anarchy

and there was no Government with which to negotiate. In winter there were fierce fightings in and around Kabul, and it was with great difficulty that Roberts kept his communications with India open. Indeed, for ten days, December 14 to 24, he was forced to abandon Kabul and the Bala Hissar, and retire to defences at Sherpore, where he was besieged by 100,000 tribesmen. Again and again he had to beat them off. To retain Afghanistan permanently was now out of question. Lord Lytton therefore deemed it advisable to break up the country into small principalities governed by British puppets. Kandahar was promised to Wali Sher Ali, a Barakzai Chief of Kandahar. No special arrangements were necessary for Herat, where Ayub Khan, full brother of Yakub Khan, still maintained himself in power. It was decided to retain Kabul under direct British administration. Opportunely there now appeared upon the scene the strong man so badly needed. It was a grandson of Dost Mohammad, Abdur Rahman. Since 1868 he had lived in banishment beyond the Oxus, as an exile. He had no sooner reappeared than a large number of people rallied round him. At this time, Lord Lytton resigned his office and the Conservative Government suffered a severe defeat in the general election. Gladstone succeeded Lord Beaconsfield as Prime Minister and Lord Ripon was sent out as Viceroy to bring about a peaceful settlement of the Afghan question. Abdur Rahman Khan was finally recognized as Amir of Kabul and Great Britain bound herself not to require the admission of an English Resident anywhere in Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman succeeded to a much reduced kingdom. Herat was under the control of Ayub Khan, while Kandahar was ruled by Wali Sher Ali, a British puppet.

The Battle or Maiwand

Ayub Khan declaring a religious war came out of Herat with the intention of driving the British out of Afghanistan. At Maiwand, 40 miles north of Kandahar, on the 27th of July, 1880, he met and defeated a British force led by General Burrows, which had been sent to check his advance. This was, as the British themselves have admitted, "one of the most notable victories ever gained by oriental troops in conflict with a European

army." The British had 914 men killed and were driven back in full retreat.

Ayub Khan after his victory marched on to invest Kandahar. On receiving the news, the British evacuated Kabul and Roberts with 10,000 picked men started for Kandahar. On September 1, 1880, Ayub Khan was attacked and defeated at Baba Wali.

The course of events had made it quite clear that the partition of Afghanistan was not possible and that Wali Sher Ali could not maintain himself at Kandahar. The Government of India, therefore, offered the Kandahar Province also to Abdur Rahman. The city was finally evacuated and formally made over to a Governor deputed from Kabul in April 1881.

For a time Abdur Rahman seemed in imminent danger of losing not only Kandahar but Kabul as well. Ayub Khan marched again from Herat, occupied Kandahar and held it for several months. Abdur Rahman set out from Kabul to offer him battle. Few thought that he could prevail, but he won a complete victory near Kandahar. Ayub fled into exile in Persia, as Herat had already fallen to Abdul Kuddus, a general deputed by Abdur Rahman Khan.

The Amir, with great energy and determination, then set about establishing peace and a strong central Government. In this he succeeded marvellously. During his reign the boundaries of Afghanistan were fixed with the neighbouring countries. On November 12, 1893, the Amir was forced to relinquish his rights over the border tribes and to accept a new line of demarcation, the so-called "Durand Line". The Amir till the end of his life bitterly resented this high-handedness of the British which deprived Afghanistan of over one-third of its population.

Amir Abdur Rahman Khan died in October, 1901, and was peacefully succeeded by his eldest son, Habibullah Khan.

Amir Habibullah Khan (1901—1919)

Amir Habibullah Khan was an enlightened monarch and a man of mild nature. He laid the foundation of the Habibia High School. He started a weekly paper the *Sirajul Akhbar* edited by the well-known Afghan writer and politician, Mahmud-i-Tarzi. This paper infused a new life and the spirit of nationalism into the country.

The Amir followed an "open door" policy. Roads were constructed and steps were taken to introduce machinery and modern means of comfort, such as hydro-electricity and water pipes into Afghanistan. European games including football, hockey, cricket, tennis, golf and badminton were encouraged, and the Amir personally took part in some of them, distributing prizes to the winners.

In 1907, the Amir visited India at the invitation of the British Indian Government. He observed strict neutrality in World War I. A German-Turkish mission reached Kabul in October, 1915, to try to induce the Amir to declare a holy war against the British, but the Amir was able to stick to his neutrality throughout the war.

In February, 1919, feeling that the time had come when he might claim the reward for his steadfastness during the War and vindicate his policy to his people, he wrote to the Viceroy, demanding written recognition by the Peace Conference of Afghanistan's "absolute liberty, freedom of action and perpetual independence." But on the night of the 20th of February, he was assassinated in his shooting camp at Kala-gosh in the Laghman valley.

His younger brother, Sardar Nasrullah Khan, who was then at Jalalabad, proclaimed himself king. But Sardar Amanullah Khan, the third son of the Amir, who was Regent in Kabul availing of the opportunity, declared himself king of Afghanistan on 28th February, 1919, in presence of all civil and military officials in Kabul.

King Amanullah (1919—29)

Amannllah's first act after accession was to proclaim the independence of Afghanistan. On March 3, 1919, he informed the Viceroy of his accession and at the same time asked for a revision of the treaties. "Our independent and free Government," he wrote, "considers itself ready at every time and season, to conclude such agreements and treaties with the British Government as may be useful and serviceable, in the way of commercial advantages to our Government and yours." The Viceroy replied: "From this it seems possible that the commercial requirements of Afghanistan are thought to call for some agreement with the British Government, subsidiary to the treaties and engagements above mentioned." On receiving this unencouraging answer, Amanullah sent his forces to the eastern border and adopted every sort of precautionary measures.

The War of Independence (or The Third Anglo-Afghan War)

On May 3, shots were exchanged between the British forces and Afghan soldiers at the mouth of the Khyber Pass, and from this hostilities began on all three fronts—Khyber, Peiwar, and Speen Boldak. These military operations against the British were largely unsuccessful, save for the advance of Sardar Mohammad Nadir (later King Nadir Shah) and his brothers, in the central sector. In the First and Second Afghan Wars, British armies invaded Afghanistan. On this occasion, the Afghans invaded India. Sardar Mohammad Nadir Khan was able to take Thal, while Shah Wali Khan captured Wana, two important strategical points. At the same time the majority of the border tribes rose against the British. On May 31, 1919, an armistice was concluded and hostilities ceased. In the negotiations at Rawalpindi (August 1919) the British accepted Afghanistan's complete independence and full freedom which was later on confirmed by the Treaty of Friendship signed in Kabul in 1922. Thus Afghanistan once more took its place among the sovereign states of the world.

Emboldened by his initial success, Amanullah Khan attempted a series of reforms. The king's persistence in his

His Late Majesty
King Mohammed Nadir Shah-e-Shaheed
(1929-1933)

King Amanullah
(1919-1929)

views in face of increasing opposition by some fanatical elements instigated by foreign imperialistic powers ultimately led to his ruin.

In 1924, a rebellion broke out in the tribal areas round Khost. Amanullah succeeded in putting down this revolt, but at a great cost to the country's finance and manpower.

Late in 1927, the King embarked on an extensive world tour, which took him to the leading countries of the Middle East and Europe and eventually to Russia. He returned to Kabul in June, 1928, summoning a Loya Jirga (Grand Tribal Assembly). He announced his extraordinary programme for modernizing Afghanistan overnight which proved his undoing. The fact that he was devoted to the country no one can deny, but Amanullah, in following the example of Mustafa Kamal, failed to realize that Turkey and Afghanistan were differently situated. Turkey was closely linked with the western world for centuries, while Afghanistan, in the heart of Asia aloof and isolated, could ill afford sudden and drastic changes. He forgot the maxim : 'Rome was not built in a day.'

This brought about a second and more serious uprising, first in Shinwar, near the Khyber Pass, and then in Koh Daman, north of the Capital. The army was either unable or unwilling to suppress the uprising, so Amanullah abdicated in favour of his elder brother, Sardar Inayetullah, and left for Kandahar by car. Sardar Inayetullah himself was obliged to abdicate only three days later, escaping *via* India to join his brother at Kandahar. Bacha Saqa, the brigand-chief, entering Kabul, proclaimed himself Amir. In the spring of 1929, Amanullah collected a large army at Kandahar with a view to regaining his throne. He came as far as Ghazni, but encountering strong opposition from all sides, abandoned the country, and went to Rome *via* India, where he passed the remaining days of his life.

H. M. King Mohammed Nadir Shah Shaheed (1929—33)

King Mohammad Nadir Shah, the second son of Sardar Mohammad Yusuf Khan, was born on April 9, 1883. In him were

united the two royal houses of Mohammadzais and Durranis. On his father's side, he was the grandson of Sardar Sultan Mohammad Khan, brother of Amir Dost Mohammad, the founder of the Mohammadzai dynasty; and from his mother's side he descended from Ahmad Shah Durrani, founder of modern Afghanistan.

During the reign of Amir Habibullah, Sardar Mohammad Nadir and the members of his family, did their best for the advancement of the country. The family continued to serve Afghanistan during the early days of Amanullah Khan, and never willingly withdrew its cooperation. It was due to their heroic actions in the Third Anglo-Afghan War that the country gained its independence.

Shortly after, the brilliant career of Sardar Mohammad Nadir and his brothers stimulated jealousies at the Court. Differences with the King and his Government obliged Sardar Mohammad Nadir to resign his post and retire to private life in a quiet French villa at Nice. It was here that he heard that his country had fallen a prey to the Brigand-Chief. Though seriously ill and confined to bed, he could not keep himslf away when his countrymen were undergoing all sorts of oppression and cruelty at the hands of Bacha Saqa. On the 25th January, 1929, Sardar Mohammad Nadir accompanied by his brothers, Sardar Mohammad Hashim and Sardar Shah Wali left for Afghanistan. Sardar Shah Mahmud, their younger brother, who was then in Kabul, went to meet them at the Afghan border. The four had a long talk, wherein Sardar Shah Mahmud gave all the details of the revolt, with its attendant horrors.

From March until October, the struggle for deliverance continued, the brothers playing an important role in this national drama. Routed again and again, they ever rose with fresh heart from the disaster, till at last on October 15, their efforts were crowned with success. The Bacha was driven out of the capital, and peace was restored.

The reception which Sardar Mohammad Nadir received at Kabul was never excelled by that accorded to a triumphant caesar.

Thousands of people from all parts of the country had lined both sides of the route. They went wild with enthusiasm and delight at the sight of their deliverer. In a Jirga held at Salamkhana, Sardar Mohammad Nadir was unanimously elected king.

The first aim of the new King was to restore peace and order throughout the country. The brigand-chief with his accomplices was arrested, court-martialled and executed. Then turning to internal reforms, schools and useful institutions and cultural centres were reopened, and new ones were added to meet the growing needs of the country. A Literary Academy (*Anjuman-i-adabi*), came into being to help advance enlightenment. A military college was founded and a medical faculty was started (1932). A large number of Afghan students were sent abroad for higher education. A group of them proceeded to America for the first time to study at the Columbia University of New York. A bank (*Shirkat-i-sahami*) was established, the forerunner of modern Afghan National Bank. Dams were built to store water in order to irrigate the parched lands and generate electricity. A road was constructed through the heart of the Hindu Kush (Dar-i-shikari). But the crowning achievement of his reign was the promulgation of a Constitution, which provided for an Upper and a Lower House.

Unfortunately, this ordered and steady march of progress was tragically cut short by the murder of the King on the afternoon of November 8, 1933, when he was attending a prize-distribution function for school children. No disorder took place, and he was peacefully succeeded by his only surviving son, Mohammad Zahir, then a body of nineteen.

H. M. King Mohammed Zahir Shah

Mohammed Zahir Shah, the present King of Afghanistan, was born in Kabul on October 15, 1914. He completed his elementary education in Kabul, and then in July, 1924, when his father was appointed as the Minister-Plenipotentiary of Afghanistan in Paris, he accompanied him and joined the first group of students sent to France by the Afghan Government. He studied at various educational institutions (Lycee Janson de Sailly, Lycee Pasteur and College de Montpellier). The accession to the throne of King Nadir Shah necessitated Prince Zahir's return from Paris in October, 1930.

First he joined the Military School in Kabul. During the absence of his uncle, Sardar Shah Mahmud Ghazi, the Prince officiated as the Ministar of Defence. Later, he was asked to head the Ministry of Education. Three months later the tragic death of his father brought Prince Mohammed Zahir to the throne.

The reign of King Mohammed Zahir Shah has been a period of steady progress and national awakening. Being a constitutional king, he wisely chooses to advise rather than to rule, to influence rather than to command.

Under his leadership the people of Afghanistan aim at transforming their country into a modern progressive democracy, assuring social justice and a higher standard of living for all.

Afghanistan, which for centuries was the meeting point between East and West and where many cultures have flourished and intermingled, hopes to be restored to the position it enjoyed before the discovery of the new sea-route reduced the importance of the famous Silk-route. With its modern highways and many airline services Afghanistan is already gaining world-wide importance. Efforts are being made to promote tourism.

Hotels are springing up in all parts of the country, which is taking on a new look. Foreign visitors pour into the country in ever-increasing number, some flying, others are making use of the new paved roads.

Once a land almost closed to foreigners, Afghanistan today has a cosmopolitan outlook. All over the country experts and technicians from international agencies as well as from many friendly countries are busy helping the Afghans to build new roads, harness the rivers, exploit mineral resources and improve teaching systems and agricultural methods.

Huge electric projects have been taken in hand. Vast areas of virgin soil are being brought under cultivation. New methods of farming are being introduced. Age-old industries are being modernized and new ones are being set up.

Since his accession to the throne His Majesty Zahir Shah has taken a keen interest in social, educational and economic uplift of the country. Realizing that the first and foremost problem was the lack of education and trained personnel to carry out the vast projects and assume responsible posts, he gave top priority to education. Free education has been and is being provided at all levels. Many high schools, middle schools and primary schools have been started all over the country. Afghanistan has made great progress in the field of education, especially during the last two decades. In 1950 the number of students on roll was hardly 100,000 (99,635 to be exact). In 1965 it shot up to 403,285 and today it is over 600,000, an increcse of nearly 600%.

The new Constitution (promulgated in 1964) lays great emphasis on education. The aim of the State is to wipe out illiteracy in the shortest space of time and to reach a stage where suitable facilities for education are provided to all Afghan citizens.

Education in Afghanistan is financed and controlled by the Government and is free throughout. Besides, the Ministry supplies books, exercise books, papers and pencils to all the students without any charge. Faculty students in addition to these concessions receive a small amount of pocket-money to enable them to pay for the bus fares and to have light refreshments in college hours. Those who come from the countryside have the facilities of having free board and lodging. Brilliant students are sent abroad for higher education.

In 1956 the Afghan Government under the guidance of His Majesty the King and leadership of Sardar Mohammed Daoud, the Prime Minister undertook organized development of the country by launching the First Five-Year Plan. Despite the lack of funds, technical experience and personnel, much progress was achieved and it was in every sense a landmark in Afghan history. Measured in terms of outlay (about 15 million afghanis) the Plan was perhaps a modest one. But it was the first comprehensive and coordinated attempt at development. The Second Five-Year Plan began on March 21, 1962. Greater emphasis was laid on transport and means of communication. It was estimated that a sum of 44,500 million afghanis, which was about three times the actual expenditure incurred during the First Five-Year Plan, would be required to implement this Plan. Foreign assistance was to account for more than half of the outlay (about 56%).

Most of these planning activities during the first and second plans were directed to the construction of roads, dams, airports and power plants. Textile mills and cement factories were established and efforts were made to develop natural gas struck in the north.

But the crowning achievement of this period is the social reform. A revolution has taken place in the life and status of Afghan women. In 1959, they guided by Her Majesty the Queen, began to throw off the veil in a demonstration of their desire to assume equal status with men and to shoulder new responsibilities. Since then Afghan women have been making steady progress in all walks of life.

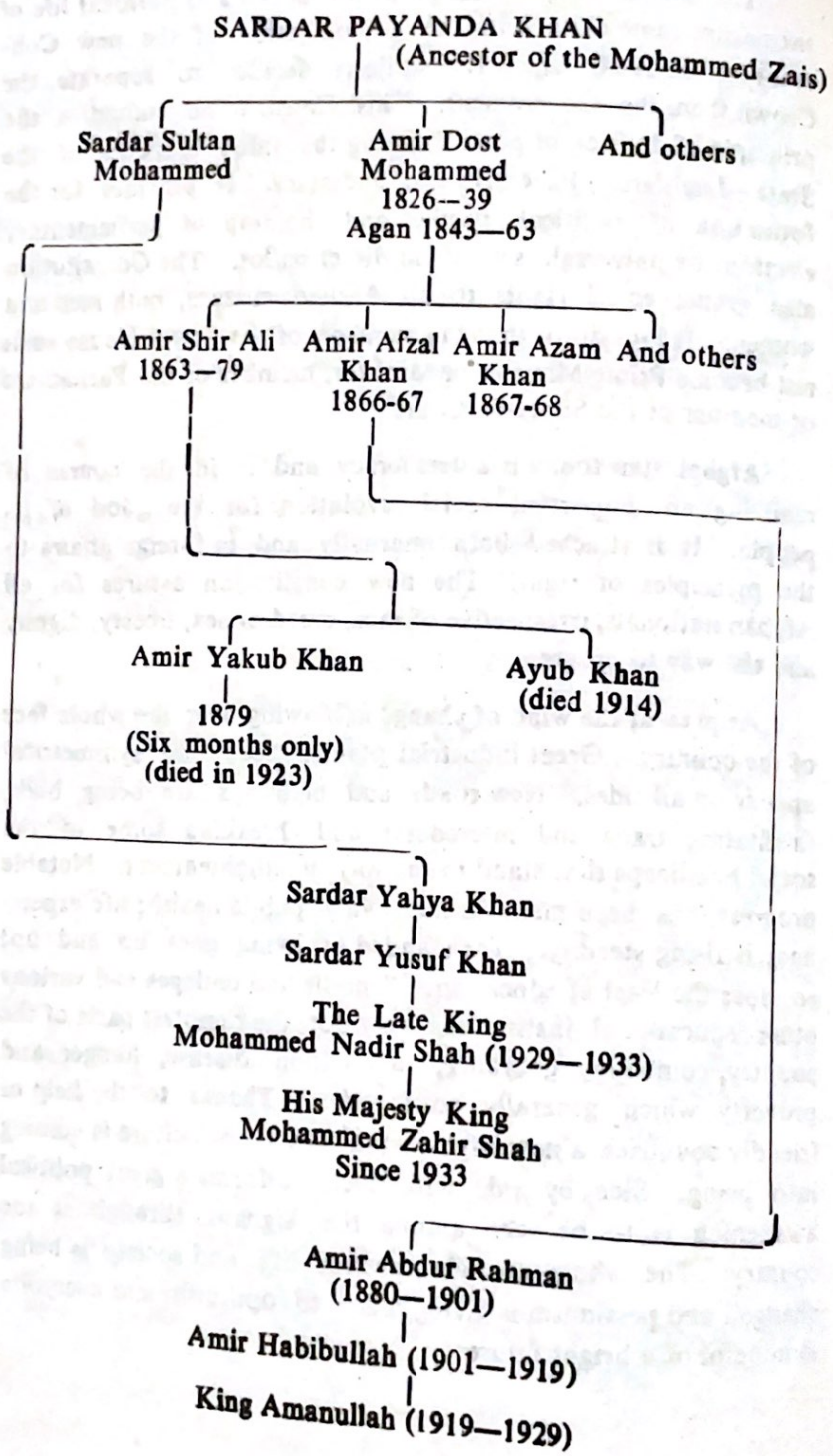
Many girls are successfully graduating each year from schools and colleges. There is no subject which they do not study now. With men they take competitive examinations. All jobs in all departments are open to them provided they have the necessary qualifications. In 1964 with men they took a keen interest in the election of the members of the Parliament, and some even succeeded in being elected to the House.

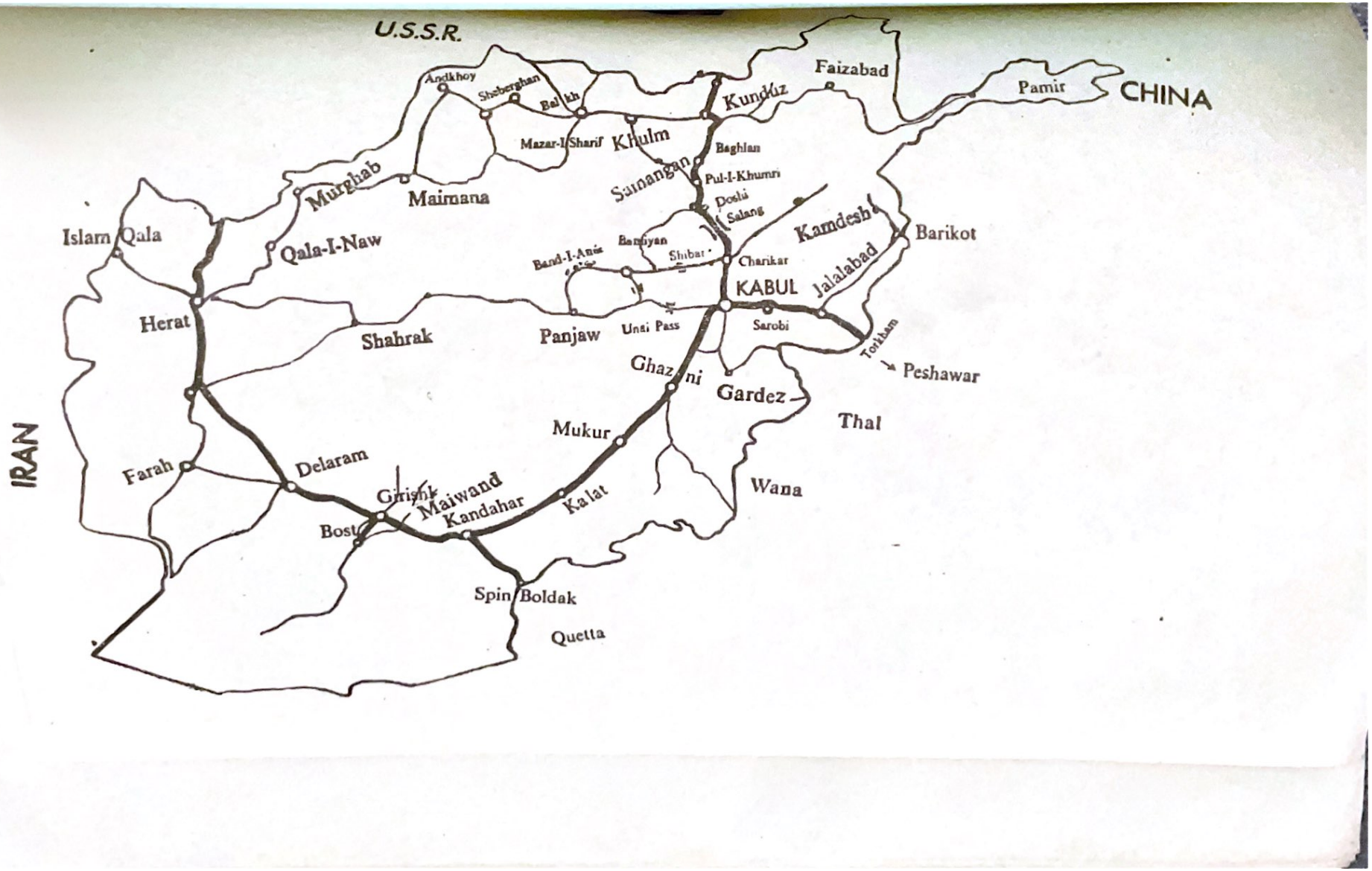
The second major change in the social and political life of the nation came about with the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1964, when His Majesty decided to separate the Crown from the Government. This Constitution embodies the principle of division of powers among the three branches of the State—Legislative, Executive and Judiciary. It provides for the formation of political parties and holding of parliamentary elections by universal, secret and direct ballot. The Constitution also grants equal rights to all Afghan citizens, both men and women. It lays down that the members of the Royal House shall not become Prime Minister or Minister, member of the Parliament or member of the Supreme Court.

Afghanistan today is a democracy and is in the course of realizing an important social revolution for the good of its people. It is attached both internally and in foreign affairs to the principles of right. The new constitution assures for all Afghan nationals, irrespective of race, creed or sex, liberty, dignity and the way to progress.

At present the wind of change is blowing over the whole face of the country. Great industrial plants, clean and symmetrical appear on all sides. New roads and highways are being built, facilitating trade and intercourse and breaking some of the social handicaps that stand in the way of enlightenment. Notable progress has been made in improving public health; life expectancy is rising steadily. The standed of living goes up and up; so does the level of education. Schools and colleges and various other educational institutions now dot the remotest parts of the country, combating ignorance, superstition, disease, hunger and proverty which generally go together. Thanks to the help of friendly countries, a new Afghanistan with a new culture is coming into being. Side by side with social reforms a great political awakening is to be seen among the Afghans throughout the country. The whole attitude towards life and society is being changed and pessimism is giving place to optimism and everyone is hopeful of a bright future.

GENEALOGY


SARDAR PAYANDA KHAN
(Ancestor of the Mohammed Zais)
Sardar Sultan Mohammed
Amir Dost Mohammed 1826--39 Agan 1843—63
And others
Amir Shir Ali 1863—79
Amir Afzal Khan 1866-67
Amir Azam Khan 1867-68
And others
Amir Yakub Khan
1879
(Six months only)
(died in 1923)
Ayub Khan
(died 1914)
Sardar Yahya Khan
Sardar Yusuf Khan
The Late King Mohammed Nadir Shah (1929—1933)
His Majesty King Mohammed Zahir Shah Since 1933
Amir Abdur Rahman (1880—1901)
Amir Habibullah (1901—1919)
King Amanullah (1919—1929)


U.S.S.R.
Andkhoy
Sheberghan
Balkh
Kunduz
Faizabad
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CHINA
Mazar-I-Sharif
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Samangan
Pul-I-Khumri
Murghab
Maimana
Doshi
Salang
Kamdesh
Barikot
Islam Qala
Qala-I-Naw
Bamiyan
Shibar
Charikar
Band-I-Amir
KABUL
Jalalabad
Herat
Shahrak
Panjaw
Unai Pass
Sarobi
Torkham
Peshawar
Ghazni
Gardez
Thal
Mukur
IRAN
Farah
Delaram
Girishk
Maiwand
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